

MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

Success Stories from the Field

Edwards Manufacturing

Florida Manufacturing Extension Partnership

Edwards Manufacturing Gets A Charge Out Of Lean Implementation

Client Profile:

Edwards Manufacturing, Ltd. has been a leading provider of custom point-of-sale and food handling equipment for the food retailing industry since 1994. Headquartered in Tampa, Florida, Edwards Manufacturing employs 185 people in three divisions: Edwards Manufacturing (Tampa), Edwards Wholesale (Tampa), and M&H Manufacturing (Atlanta).

Situation:

Edwards Manufacturing chose to implement lean manufacturing at its facilities in an effort to improve customer service, reduce lead times, and improve costs and quality. However, the company lacked internal expertise to accomplish its goal. Edwards called the Florida Manufacturing Extension Partnership (Florida MEP), a NIST MEP network affiliate, for assistance.

Solution:

Florida MEP began by offering Edwards Manufacturing basic lean training for a cross-section of its salaried and hourly employees, focusing on the Electrical department. Then Florida MEP led Edwards Manufacturing through a value stream mapping exercise, in which employees map every step of the manufacturing process to identify problems and devise an action plan to resolve them. The team reviewed the entire process and implemented point-of-use storage, workplace organization techniques (5S), pull/kanban systems, visual documentation, and balanced flow as part of its action plan. Next, Florida MEP helped the Edwards team design and build customized workstations, along with tool cabinets with see-through plexiglass doors for instant visual confirmation of tool availability. The team performed time studies of the company's value-added operations and implemented a complete new department layout, utilizing balanced product flow, to eliminate waste. Finally, Florida MEP recommended the team use digital pictures to clarify assembly instructions and key quality notes.

Results:

- Decreased assembly lead time by 63 percent.
- Reduced work-in-process by 63 percent.
- Increased productivity by 30 percent.
- Reduced product travel distance by 79 percent.

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Significantly reduced defects and rework.

Testimonial:

"The Florida Manufacturing Extension Partnership exposed lean thinking that helps managers and workers clearly specify value, to line up all the value-creating activities for a specific product along a value stream, and make value flow smoothly at the pull of the customer in pursuit of perfection."

Peter Schaller, Plant Manager/Wood Shop